United States Senate

NEWS RELEASE

Craig, Stabenow Introduce Bill to Enhance Specialty Crop Competitiveness

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Larry Craig, R-Idaho, and Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., today introduced the Specialty Crop Competition Act of 2007 (S.1160). The legislation would strengthen the economic role of specialty crops - the fruits, vegetables, and other crops that account for $34 billion in revenues a year nationwide. The bill is expected to serve as the framework for a new specialty crop provision in the 2007 Farm Bill.

"Idaho is a top producer of specialty crops, including cherries, table grapes, apples, onions, carrots, seeds, nursery plants, and, of course, potatoes," said Craig. "While specialty crops represent nearly fifty-four percent of the cash receipts for all crops, they often receive second-tier treatment by the federal government. This legislation helps to ensure specialty crops receive the attention they deserve."

"Specialty crops account for half of the annual cash receipts from farm crops in America," said Stabenow. "Historically, though, this segment of our agricultural economy has been under-represented in the Farm Bill. The time has come to step up and show our support for these farmers and for the industry they help drive. We need a Farm Bill that works for all of our farmers."

The Specialty Crops bill will assist farmers in developing crops that are more economically viable and environmentally friendly, finding new markets, including gaining access to foreign markets, providing research and administrative funding to combat pests and disease, and providing school nutrition programs with more fruits and vegetables.

The broader Farm Bill, which will be rewritten by Congress this year, has strong implications for the agricultural industry and the potential to spur critical economic growth across the nation. Besides specialty crops, it also has sweeping impact on our energy, conservation, rural development, and nutrition policies.

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